



A Message from the Linguistics Chair

Shine Your Light

CU has a Greek motto, although not often encountered in the original Greek on campus. Like many university mottos, ours mentions light: *Lampsato to phos humon* ('Shine your light'). President Norlin's famous charge, read at every CU graduation for the past 75 years, evokes this theme: *What the university purposes to be, what it must always strive to be, is represented on its seal, which is stamped on your diplomas — a lamp in the hands of youth*. How do we in the CU Linguistics community today embody the Norlin Charge? The field itself provides guidance: linguistics is the study of both our shared human heritage and our diversity—our diverse linguistic practices, our changing usage habits, the identities and ideologies we express through language. As teachers and students of linguistics we can pass the lamp of learning to a new generation of language researchers, illuminate the perspectives of scholars of color and shed light on linguistic dimensions of societal inequities. CU Linguistics researchers pioneered use of ethnographic and corpus methods to study how diverse groups use language in daily life. LING Assistant Professor Jeremy Calder is carrying forth that tradition, researching the roles of phonetic and embodied practice in the performance and construction of marginalized identities in communities of queer/trans and BIPOC individuals. Dr. Calder also directs the new [Colorado Language Trends Project](#).



Leading Lights in Language Revitalization and Documentation

We have a long tradition of studying the lives, cultures and languages of those who peopled the West before European settlement and conquest, including major work on Arapaho (Algonquian), Wichita (Caddoan) and Lakota (Siouan). Using modern geospatial mapping techniques, LING Assistant Professor Hannah Haynie examines geographic patterns associated with language contact, language spread, and isolation among the extraordinarily diverse indigenous languages of California (80-90 spoken before first contact). One of our newest faculty members, Assistant Professor Alexis Palmer, has brought a prestigious NSF CAREER grant with her to CU. In this project, FOLTA (From One Language to Another), she will work on cross-linguistic methods for better development of language processing tools for low-resource languages. Her work asks how we can make the outcomes of linguistic documentation more useable and accessible, particularly to support development of pedagogical materials for a language. If the activities of its junior faculty are an index of the health of a department, CU Linguistics is stronger than ever. In fact, we rank 7th among US linguistics programs according to Academic Analytics' Scholarly Research Index—just ahead of UC Berkeley Linguistics, my PhD alma mater and that of Profs. Hall, Haynie and Cowell (Go Bears!).

Linguists do the Work of the World

Our graduates are building careers in the linguistic technology sector (including research positions at Google, Oracle, Rosetta Stone, Amazon, and the Allen Institute for AI) and tenure-track faculty jobs at universities like UC Santa Barbara, UC Davis, US San Diego, University of Arizona, University of Florida and University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. We could rest on those laurels, but as an outward looking discipline, we are compelled to address issues of societal equity and social justice. In collaboration with Dr. Rai Farrelly, Senior Instructor of TESOL Theory and Practice, Prof. Kira Hall is expanding our undergraduate literacy practicum to connect our Buff Buddy literacy teachers to refugee learners. Our [Talking Politics](#) webinar series brought together anthropology and linguistics experts to share their distinctive analytic perspectives on political communication in the 2020 US Presidential Election. Our student-run [Linguists at Work](#) series explored career paths for BA, MA and PhD graduates in linguistics—in translation, education, speech pathology and more. Many of us interpret linguistic science for the public. Prof. Chase Raymond even has [something to say](#) about how the pandemic has changed our daily communicative routines. We are among the first Linguistics departments in the US to offer undergraduate students a suite of major concentrations, and it should come as no surprise that [these major tracks](#) are all interdisciplinary. Students can specialize in sociocultural/interactional linguistics, computational linguistics, TESOL or linguistic cognition.



Passing the Torch

This past spring we bid adieu to Professor Zygmunt Frajzyngier, who retired in May 2021 after over 50 years on the CU faculty. He is a world-renowned scholar of Afro-Asiatic languages, having conducted fieldwork in Cameroon, Chad, Northern Nigeria, Ghana, Siberia and China for many years. We established the [Frajzyngier Endangered Languages Fund](#) this year, to provide funding for graduate and advanced undergraduate students who will carry on these documentation efforts in any region of the world where minority languages face extinction. As Prof. Frajzyngier moves into the next phase of his scholarly life, as an emeritus professor of Linguistics, we welcome two new faculty members engaged in language preservation and documentation efforts and new directions for our department. Dr. Ambrocio Gutiérrez Lorenzo (PhD, UT Austin, 2021) is a documentary and descriptive linguist whose research focuses on the syntax and semantics of the Zapotec (Otomanguean) languages of southern Mexico. A first-language speaker of Teotitlán del Valle Zapotec, Prof. Gutiérrez Lorenzo will promote work on indigenous languages by native speakers and members of heritage communities. Dr. Joseph Dupris, Jr. (PhD, U AZ, 2021) explores the implications of racial and political recognition in tribal contexts, and offers an approach to tribalizing language research in an era of revitalization and reclamation. Dr. Dupris, who is enrolled in the Klamath Tribes of southern OR and northern CA), was introduced to maqlaqsyals as a child attending tribal culture camps. He now develops teaching methods and workshops to help youth learn—and adults re-embrace—a language that has long been suppressed. Our Center for the Study of Indigenous Languages of the West has been reborn as the Center for the Study of Indigenous Languages to promote this broadened focus on indigeneity, community sovereignty and linguistic self-determination in communities throughout the Americas.



Lighting the Way

Language, like learning, relies on cultural transmission. Bishop Berkeley (namesake of my alma mater) said that “a ray of imagination or of wisdom may enlighten the universe, and glow into remotest centuries”. You can help us continue to shine a light on properties of language, enlighten students and illuminate the public discourse about language. Please see our website’s [Donate Tab](#) for nine key initiatives in which your gift can advance the research and teaching missions of CU Linguistics. Help us keep the lights on!

In service and solidarity,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Laura A. Michaelis". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Laura" being more prominent.

Laura Michaelis

Chair
CU Linguistics
Boulder, CO
October 2021

